

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SENESCENCE

By

Preston Kline Caye, Ph.D

That we may properly view our subject in its true perspective we must realize one basic fundamental truth that each patient as he presents himself to us for assistance represents the sum total of all of his entire life plus all of his past experiences. He is as he is today because of what he was yesterday. His entire physical, mental and emotional lives of the past are merged into his present personality. From babyhood to the present moment, his entire life developed around two very different but basically fundamental worlds – that of himself and that which was not himself.

The secret of living – the secret of happiness – secret of eternal youth, if you please, depends upon the merging, the blending or balancing of these two great worlds – world within and the world without. This is the second basic statement. In other words, I am referring to the adjustment of the individual to his environment. All major adjustments are made according to basic pattern while minor adjustment differ widely and often times to cover a weakness in personality reaction may be opposite to the basic pattern of behavior.

To clarify the presentation of the subject we are recognizing in this dissertation only three division of the individuals life. They are:

1. Childhood – including adolescence
2. Adulthood
3. Senescence

This paper purports to deal only with the third but as Senescence is but a continuation of the first and second parts as mentioned, proper consideration must be given to all phases as necessary.

Thus it has been found that the patient's happiness, well being, and manner of living depends upon three things, namely:

1. Himself
2. His environment
3. His reaction thereto

There is a difference between personality and individuality. The individuality is what we really are while personality may be defined as a reflection of our individuality in the presence of our associates and friends. Personality is deeper than this and not easily defined but there may be recognized in it the following components:

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| 1. Physical qualities | | the Physical |
| 2. Intellectual | “ | “ Intellect |
| 3. Emotional | “ | “ Temperament |
| 4. Social | “ | “ Ethical disposition |
| 5. Moral | “ | “ Character |
| 6. Spiritual | “ | “ Religious experiences |

To quote here from Sadler in his Theory and Practice of Psychiatry, page 235-

I. PHYSICAL QUALITIES – THE PHYSIQUE

1. Health – energy and vitality
2. Physical presence – features, stature, and posture
3. Technic of expression – voice, smile, and handshake
4. Personal appearance – tastes, neatness, and cleanliness
5. Physical habits – eating, and other forms of behavior

II. INTELLECTUAL QUALITIES – THE INTELLECT

1. Reason – Wise discernment – logical thinking
2. Judgment – disciplined discretion – sagacity, discrimination
3. Imagination – foresight and broad comprehension, organizing ability
4. Concentration – faithful application – sustained observation
5. Thinking time – speed of perception and execution
6. Memory – attention and studiousness, disciplines recollection
7. Originality – initiative – creative capacity.

III. EMOTIONAL QUALITIES - - THE TEMPERAMENT

1. Enthusiasm – viva city. Devotion to duty
2. Optimism – cheerfulness. Hopefulness, joyousness, and sanguineness
3. Sense of honor – light-heartedness – wittiness
4. Ambition – aggressiveness and industriousness
5. Courage – forcefulness and determination. Bravery, fearlessness and pluckiness
6. Caution – carefulness. Prudence – willingness to counsel
7. Self-control – even temperedness, emotional maturity, self-possession, calmness, composure

IV. SOCIAL QUALITIES - - THE ETHICAL DISPOSITION

1. Tact – discretion, modesty, and charm, adroitness and diplomacy
2. Sociability – friendliness, gratitude, affability, and geniality
3. Effective speech – culture and scholarship
4. Understanding comprehension of human nature
5. Cooperation – teamwork – patriotism and group loyalty
6. Kindness – unselfishness and willingness to serve, sympathy and generosity
7. Fairness – respect for the rights of others – impartiality and generosity
8. Good Sportsmanship – ability to lose gracefully
9. Adaptability – resourcefulness and adjustability – accommodation
10. Leadership – capacity to delegate work- executive ability – ability to guide and direct
11. Tolerance – charitableness and willingness to receive criticism - broadmindedness
12. Wholesome rivalry – the spirit of play – friendly competition

VI. SPIRITUAL QUALITIES – THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

1. Idealism – maturity of attitude – nobility of character – the concept of perfection
2. Altruism – consciousness of human brotherhood – benevolence
3. Forgiveness – bestowal of mercy
4. Reverence – spiritual insight – awe of the Supreme – adoration of the infinite
5. Worshipfulness – spiritual communion – veneration of Deity
6. Love – supreme emotion – masters sentiment
7. God-consciousness – religious experience.

“These six groups of components of human personality act as a whole in the experience of a human being.” Out of the unification of Personality we have feelings of six different sorts, namely:

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|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Sensual feelings | 4. Esthetic feelings |
| 2. Intellectual “ | 5. Ethical “ |
| 3. Sentimental “ | 6. Spiritual “ |

Here must be recognized the five master Psychological Drives. Again to quote from Sadler, page 57:

1. LIFE URGE – the master motive of self-preservation

1. The hunger emotion associated with the instinct of nutrition – the food urge –master biologic drive. This urge is at the bottom of all economic problems.
2. The fear emotion associated with the instinct of flight – immediate personal safety urge. One of the basic animal impulses.
3. The emotion of anger aroused in association with the instinct of pugnacity. A state of mind and body occasioned by interference with any and all forms of biologic acidity – human emotions and associated instincts – the urge of self-defense. Rage exerts an immediate influence upon the ductless gland system.
4. The personal comfort urge – the pleasure group of human emotions embracing those impulses which lead to personal comfort and the enjoyment of pleasurable feelings as a part of the satisfaction of living. This group of feelings has to do with an effort to avoid the emotions of disgust associated with the repulsion instinct; to avoid those experiences for which one has an aversion and otherwise to make as pleasant as possible one’s earthly sojourn.

II. THE SEX URGE – the reproduction group – the master motive of sensuous gratification

1. The emotion of sex hunger as bound up and associated with the reproductive instinct. The human sex urge has many ramifications extending into the intellectual social and artistic domains. Next to the food urge, sex is commonly the dominant psychobiologic drive.
2. The super emotion of love is aroused in the human mind as the expressions of numerous associated emotions, impulses, and sentiments.

3. The emotion of tenderness and pity as associated with the parental instinct. All the impulses of family life are bound up in this complex urge.
4. The complex emotion of admiration and devotion as associated with that highly complex super impulse – family loyalty.

III. THE POWER URGE – the master motive of egoistic gratification

1. The emotion of elation – supreme type of self-satisfaction which is associated with the primary animal instinct of self-assertion. This urge is the wellspring of ambition.
2. The hoarding emotion as an expression of the instinct of acquisition – property urge of the human species. The foundation of avarice.
3. The emotion which finds satisfaction in the pride of creation – the urge associated with the constructive instinct of the species; urge to create, build, organize, and manufacture.
4. The composite emotion or urge of courage and its associated feeling of rivalry.
5. The pride of personality – that composite emotion which has associated with it at times, and in varying degree, such human emotions as envy and jealousy, and which accounts for no small amount of man's effort to advance and achieve.
6. Hate and revenge are twin demons which, together with their nefarious offspring, scorn and contempt, do so much to wreck human happiness and produce sorrow of the world.

IV. THE SOCIAL URGE - the dominance of the herd instincts

1. The emotion of security which is bound up with the gregarious or herd instinct of the human species.
2. The emotion of personal subjection which is associated under certain circumstances with the instinct of self-abasement, the willingness to subordinate the pride of personality to the demands of the situation.
3. The composite and more complex emotions of imitation which insure conformity to custom and explain adherence to the social conventions.
4. Friendship- that complex human emotion which makes life worth living, and which is supremely manifested in loyalty to one's friends, occupation, or profession, as well as in the super urge of patriotism. All these high human emotions are held together by sympathy.
5. Play and humor – emotions and impulses indeed difficult of definition but characteristically human and highly social in their manifestation.

V. THE WORSHIP URGE – consciousness of spiritual realities

1. The basic emotion of wonder as associated with the instinct of curiosity, which is shared with many of the animals.
2. Reverence and awe – composite human emotions built up from certain basic animal instincts.
3. Gratitude and humility – two other composite emotions experienced in the evolving human intellect.
4. Remorse and self-reproach – also composite human emotions dependent on the recognition of standards of right and wrong.
5. Altruism – superemotion, sometimes amounting to an urge, which leads towards the practice of the Golden Rule.
6. Idealism – many of the more spiritual phases of artistic and idealistic impulses belong to this group.

Pages 57-59

The world without, the world of environment or phenomenal world in which the ego of the individual seeks expansion of his personality may be divided as follows:

1. MATERIAL WORLD
 - a. Physical environment'
 - b. Intellectual “
 - c. Emotional “
2. SOCIAL WORLD
 - a. Ethical environment
 - b. Moral “
3. COSMIC WORLD
 - a. Ethical-Moral Environment'
 - b. The realm of spiritual experience

At the beginning of this paper, it was stated that health and well being of the individual depended upon the harmonious adjustment or compensation of the individual to his environment. Lack of adjustment results in poor health, nervous, many and varied types of psychoses. Individuality and personality have been defined and the component factors of the latter given. Environment has been briefly outlined and that leaves only the third factor for consideration.

The matter of compensation or failure to do so has been ably discussed by many excellent writers. Our good friend and Preceptor, Dr. Riley Spitler, has given us the best, the briefest and the most understandable of any on this subject. Those that have not been fortunate to have taken this work from him have missed a great deal and there is no necessity of repeating here what we have previously had. It is not the purpose of the writer of this paper to furnish any predigested rules of actions but to build a

frame for you to do your own thinking. In the time allotted for this paper, it is impossible to treat any single part of the subject completely so brevity is of necessity and not of choice.

Of the three psychological stages of the individual's life – childhood – adulthood – and senescence – the latter presents serious problems in the present in the preceding two. In childhood there is an expression of personality, radiant good health and an abundance of vitality. In adult life there is balancing or stabilizing of physical, emotional and mental lives, while in senescence there is a contraction of personality with an introspective attitude which is usually bad and mere often an accompanying ill-health.

It is usually the latter that brings the individual as a patient to the office for help. He usually wants to see but is may be pain or discomfort, or fear of losing his sight. Therefore he has a definite purpose for consulting his doctor and the wise doctor will seek and treat the basic motivation cause. Whether it be the patient's desire:

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|----------------|--|
| 1. To see | Distance |
| | Close |
| 2. For comfort | Distance |
| | Close |
| 3. For Fear | Of losing eyesight |
| | Of losing ability to pursue gainful occupation |
| 4. Style | This should not be overlooked as some of these elderly people are very conscious of their appearances. |

Every patient that consults with us and seeks the benefit of our skill and training comes as a response to certain motivating causes. These must be analyzed and classified by the doctor if the patient is to be satisfied. Some doctors do this without realizing their pattern of action – they are what the world calls natural successes. In order to properly treat we must know what is the task before us. In some cases, if it cannot be ascertained without the patient's awareness, it is better to ask, "Just what brought you to me?", rather than fail. But always remember the answer given by the patient may not be the true cause for you may have aroused his mental defense mechanism but, in any event, it will provide a new line of approach. We must always recognize and properly handle the patient's major complaint. Very often there is a secondary or minor symptom which unless recognized, could become a major point of dissatisfaction. It is not always what the patient tells us that is the most important. Serious pathological disturbances may threaten not only the patient's eyesight but his life as well. These cases call for great tact and if we are relieving a patient of his major symptom, care should be taken not to leave a worse one in its place. In other words, it is not always the condition itself but the stress or importance that the patient places upon it.

Hippocrates stated that it is more important to understand the patient than the nature of the disease. But the latter should not be neglected. Whatever we do of value for our patient is worth nothing to him unless he – the patient – appreciates it, and that depends in a large degree how he is oriented in our office. An entire thesis could be written on this point alone.